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TAGS: KPAO OPRC OIIP GM PREL

SUBJECT: ENCOURAGING CREDIBLE VOICES TO COUNTER VIOLENT
EXTREMISM

REF: A. STATE 127045

1B. STATE 020081

1C. BERLIN 00431

1D. 2007 BERLIN 01841

Classified By: MINISTER-COUNSELOR FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS HELENA KANE FINN F
OR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) Here in Berlin, there is no question that local voices advocating tolerance and understanding are most effective. We are fortunate here in having considerable support on this issue from the Interior Ministry. There is a deep understanding of the imperative to reach vulnerable segments of the population, and in particular, young people, with messages of peace and tolerance.

12. (SBU) Ambassador and Mrs. Timken departed post last week, but they have over the entire period of their tour here made this effort a top priority. We are extremely proud of the impact of the Windows on America exchange program, which they initiated. We intend to continue this highly successful outreach and hope that the support we have requested from Washington for Windows on America will be forthcoming. In addition, Public Affairs in Germany has sponsored several interfaith events that have brought together members of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities. We have also cooperated closely with our colleagues in other Embassy elements to identify suitable grant recipients engaged in projects to promote alternative perspectives. We have sent very effective messages through our cultural programs, particularly the Alvin Ailey and Battery Dance companies' performances throughout Germany. The former is comprised largely of minority talent and the latter works closely with schools having a large percentage of students from the immigrant community. We have used alumni initiatives to bring former participants in International Visitor and other USG-sponsored exchange programs with a strong focus on integration and tolerance training together with grassroots practitioners across Germany, to disseminate more broadly and actively the lessons learned and the messages carried by our alumni from their experiences in the United States. We seek out opportunities to bring Muslim and other community leaders together with USG speakers and visitors, to directly engage in policy discussions and report on those discussions within their communities. We engage with mainstream German media, in cooperation with German governmental partners, to discuss responsible reporting on minority communities and its impact on minority youth. We also work closely with organizations and individuals active in minority communities who work to reinforce moderate, mainstream values within their communities, particularly among young people.

13. (C) Following are our responses to the questions posed reftel A:

- Internal Cooperation: Mission Germany maintains extensive lists to support our intensive and broad-ranging contacts in this highly developed society. All Embassy elements work in cooperation to compile appropriately combined lists for specific events intended to influence large audiences. With specific regard to engagement with Muslim contacts, this cooperation is carried out on the working level through the Mission's interagency Muslim working group.

- Local Cooperation: In Germany, tolerance is universally advocated and violent extremism is condemned by government

officials and media. We have organized events under the auspices of Ambassador Timken designed to permit the public expression of the tolerance message by individuals held in high esteem in this society. We have some concerns about the reemergence of extreme elements on the right, as voiced in Mission Germany's Human Rights reports. We work closely with the Ministry of Interior and the Federal Commissioner for Integration, the two governmental entities directly responsible for interface with Muslim and other minority communities. The Ministry of Interior launched the Islam Conference in 2006 to engage in a more direct dialogue with Muslim communities in particular. The Ministry informs the Embassy of the developments arising from this standing conference and frequently invites Embassy observers to working-group discussions and conferences organized in support of the Islam Conference. The Mission routinely cooperates with the Ministry of Interior and other governmental agencies, such as the Union for Democracy and Tolerance, in organizing events related to encouraging tolerance and diversity.

- Impact: The expressions of tolerance which have become a routine part of many of the Mission's events have been widely reported in the press. We also regularly post speeches and photos from these events on our website. Mission elements are routinely invited to participate in events sponsored by Muslim organizations, including an Iftar event in September 2008 where our Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs addressed a predominantly Turkish-speaking audience in fluent Turkish on the importance of interfaith dialogue. The U.S. Mission to Germany has developed a reputation among minority groups and within mainstream German society, including the German federal government, as an impartial and experienced stakeholder in the integration dialogue.

- Encouragement: Mission Germany has created countless opportunities for intercultural and interfaith dialogue, immigrant exchange, and speaker and outreach programs focusing on diversity. All of these emphasize both overtly and inherently the message of tolerance. These events also encourage our contacts to speak out on core issues of tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect.

- Contact Cultivation: PA has long experience in the cultivation of appropriate contacts. We have created an array of occasions - speaker programs, round table discussions, press events, etc. - to encourage mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation. We make extensive use of the International Visitor Leadership Program(IVLP) to cultivate contacts in the Muslim community in particular. 20-30 percent of participants in the IVLP in the past three to four years have been members of the Muslim and other minority communities. These participants are selected for both standard IVLP projects and for projects of particular relevance to integration, such as the FY2009 Single Country Project "Integration and the Management of Diversity in a Multi-Ethnic Society."

- List: We consider everyone on our outreach list to be a credible local voice. Our university professors, high school teachers, panel discussants, program participants, and audiences in Germany can be universally acknowledged as advocates of peace and understanding.

- Persons or Sectors of Greatest Influence: Each program Mission Germany organizes is original and individually designed to achieve certain goals. The participants and audience for each of these programs will be also tailored to serve those goals most effectively. For example, high school teachers who participate in an Embassy-sponsored seminar on Abraham Lincoln will influence the views of countless young people on issues of equality and justice, and will reach that young audience far more effectively than policymakers who participated in the same conference would be able to do.

- Embassy Cooperation: Mission leadership encourages an intensive level of internal cooperation and partnership. As

mentioned, the interagency Muslim working group has the lead in coordinating on engagement with Muslim contacts. This working group also provides briefings to internal and visiting USG personnel.

- PD Programs: We use the entire range of public diplomacy programs - speakers, exchanges, press conferences, conferences, round tables, seminars, discussion groups, school outreach, etc. We have adapted existing PD programs, such as the IVLP, to facilitate our engagement with Muslim and other minority contacts. Where existing PD programs did not fill our needs, we have created new programs, as described below.

PA Germany concurs entirely that it is essential to provide circumstances that enable respected local figures to give expression to the most basic values we share - intellectual freedom, mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and abhorrence of violence. We have found that constructive rhetoric is most useful in conveying these messages. It is important to highlight the accomplishments of those from immigrant communities and to recognize the enormity of their potential contribution to the larger society. The United States has a wonderful story to tell, and should continue to make every effort to ensure that this story reaches those whose image of us has been negative. We also wish to state clearly that we are delighted with this request to "listen to the field." Those on the ground around the world know best what will work in each of their countries.

¶4. (SBU) The following are some specific programs we have organized, described in greater detail for those who would emulate our approach in Germany:

- Embassy Berlin organized an interfaith Passover Seder in April 2008, complementing Mission-organized Iftars, in which Muslims and Christians participated in an important Jewish celebration. According to the Rabbi who led the celebration, this was a groundbreaking event in Germany (reftel Berlin 00431.) More recently, this was followed by an interfaith Thanksgiving dinner in November.

- Using the power of the arts to break into hard-to-reach Muslim neighborhoods, the Embassy gave a grant to an American arts organization to work with an inner-city Berlin school in the spring of 2007 to develop a musical. The resulting performance, "The Streets of Wedding," attracted substantial positive attention in the mainstream German media, and was subsequently sponsored by the German Ministry of Interior for a national tour. Nearly two years after the program began, school administrators and local police note that violence, particularly racially- and ethnically-inspired violence, has dropped dramatically in the participating school, while Muslim participants publicly thank the U.S. Embassy and the local American Jewish Committee for their support of the program.

- The Windows on America exchange program, initiated in 2006, is the largest and most ambitious non-ECA/R Muslim outreach program in Europe. Most participants are of immigrant background and have never traveled outside of the districts in which they live. Through direct contact with Americans during school visits, round table discussions, and home stays with American families, participants gain a better understanding of American culture and the U.S. in general. Windows on America has been highly successful in countering stereotypes about America; Muslim participants in particular have been surprised by Americans' knowledge of Islam and tolerance for all faiths. As noted in para 2, we hope that the support we have requested from Washington for Windows on America will be forthcoming.

- Embassy Berlin has been awarded \$50,000 in S/CT Ambassador's Fund for Counterterrorism funding (see State 20081) to conduct a program to support civil society networks to counter extremist radicalization and recruitment. The program sends influential Muslim civil society, academic and religious leaders from outside Germany to meet with

Germany's Muslim community leaders to engage in a dialogue on ways to counter extremist radicalization. The proposal builds on the capacity of moderates in countries such as Indonesia and the U.K. to share their counter radicalization best practices and assist Germany-based individuals and groups in developing and spreading messages to counter extremism. The program is developing a video curriculum that promotes tolerance and undermines justifications for violence.

- For the past several years, Mission Germany has used Ramadan as an opportunity for increased personal outreach to Muslim contacts. (See 2007 Berlin 01841.) In September 2008, Ambassador Timken hosted an Iftar dinner at his residence for Muslim contacts. The program featured several exchange program alumni discussing their impressions of the U.S. before and after their program travel. One participant, a young Parliamentary staff aide of Lebanese origin, later returned the favor when she invited the Ambassador to address the German-Arabic Friendship League she directs to promote and seek support for post's public-private Windows on America exchange program.

- This year's Embassy Berlin 9/11 commemoration, organized by PA as an interfaith event, included a young conservative imam from a gritty inner-city Berlin neighborhood, who offered a prayer for the victims and their families. The families of several German victims of the 9/11 attacks were in attendance as the young cleric offered his words of peace in Berlin's Jewish Center, which hosted the memorial. The Center is located in a downtown synagogue set on fire by Nazi mobs on the Night of Broken Glass (Kristallnacht) in November 1938.

¶15. (SBU) The PA Germany staff is very proud of its accomplishments in the area of immigrant and minority outreach, and its cooperation in this area with the broader Mission team. We will be happy to provide further documentation of our activities upon request. We are very fortunate to have here first-rate cooperation from the German authorities and many German institutions. We believe that Europe is a crucial location for such outreach because it occurs in the context of fully democratic societies where immigrants have an opportunity to become educated in an environment of intellectual freedom.

Koenig